

Bush Faces Pressure On Global Warming

Europeans to Push For Shift on Kyoto

By William Drozdiak
Washington Post Foreign Service
Monday, July 16, 2001; Page A01

BRUSSELS -- European leaders plan to appeal to President Bush this week for greater cooperation in dealing with global warming by emphasizing the depth of dismay across their continent with U.S. policy and the

Officials in several European capitals said British Prime Minister Tony Blair, French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder will engage in a concerted effort to persuade Bush to relax his opposition to the Kyoto treaty, which sets mandatory targets in cutting "greenhouse gas" emissions, when they gather Friday at the Group of Eight summit of leading industrial countries in Genoa, Italy.

By coincidence, delegates from 180 countries will convene in Bonn on Monday for a two-week session designed to salvage the Kyoto Protocol, which Bush renounced in March as "fatally flawed" because, he said, it would damage U.S. economic interests. The pact calls for industrial countries to curtail their output of heat-trapping greenhouse gases -- mainly carbon dioxide from cars and power plants -- below 1990 levels.

European officials said the future of the Kyoto pact is likely to dominate the G-8 discussions partly because of the presence of Bush and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. Japan's approval is crucial to putting the treaty into effect, but Koizumi has said it makes sense to do so only if the largest producer of greenhouse gases -- the United States -- abides by its terms.

"There may be a lot of faxes flying between Bonn and Genoa," a senior German official said. "This is a case where European leaders are fully united in their belief that Kyoto must be saved. And that means doing everything possible to bring around the Americans and the Japanese."

As Bush prepares for his second trip to Europe in as many months, the public protests and hostile media criticism that greeted the man dubbed the "Toxic Texan" on his maiden diplomatic tour here appear to be gathering new momentum. Italian authorities say they are bracing for as many as 100,000 demonstrators in Genoa, where army, navy and air force units will seal off the entire port area in one of Italy's largest peacetime security operations.

While dark forces of globalization are cited as a principal target, many protesters in Europe have fastened onto a growing perception of the United States as an arrogant superpower that holds itself above the rules of international law. The Bush administration's declared intention to abrogate the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty to develop a missile defense system and its rejection of the Kyoto treaty are often cited as prime examples of such unilateralism.

Allied governments have muted their criticism of the missile defense program lately while encouraging the United States to reach an accommodation with Russia that would avoid any outright breach of the ABM Treaty. But on global warming, there is resentment that Bush broke a pledge -- ostensibly given over dinner in Goteborg, Sweden, last month to the 15 European Union leaders -- not to sabotage the Kyoto treaty by urging other countries to spurn the pact.

"We were relying on a promise by the Americans not to obstruct the Kyoto process," said Margot Wallstrom, the EU's environment chief. "This might be a matter of definition of what 'obstruction' means, but we can see that the Americans are clearly putting heavy pressure on their partners . . . to kill Kyoto."

Wallstrom said it was difficult for Europeans to comprehend the Bush administration's refusal to lead the

campaign against global warming when the United States produces more than 25 percent of the world's greenhouse gases while representing only 4 percent of its population. "The American attitude is especially unfair to poor countries, because the impact on them could be catastrophic," she said.

Wallstrom said she had traveled to Japan and Australia, which with Canada, Russia and Norway form part of the U.S.-led umbrella group that is negotiating the treaty, and found they were reluctant to proceed with the Kyoto process unless the United States went along. In the absence of U.S. backing, the treaty can become legally binding only with Japan's endorsement because it must be ratified by 55 countries responsible for at least 55 percent of greenhouse gases produced by developed nations.

Japan is torn by conflicting views about the global warming confrontation. While yearning for successful passage of the treaty named after its ancient capital, where the pact was signed in 1997 after marathon negotiations, Tokyo desperately wants to avoid a clash with its principal ally, the United States. Koizumi told parliament that his government would work with the Europeans in Bonn and Genoa to find a last-ditch way for the United States to cooperate, but he insisted "we are not at the stage where we should denounce the United States."

Faced with Japan's reluctance to deal with its problem, European leaders plan to work hard to secure a more positive response from Bush. Despite a Cabinet-level review to develop an alternative policy to the Kyoto process, U.S. delegation leader Paula Dobriansky said she will have nothing new to offer in Bonn and will reassert Bush's rejection of any mandatory cuts in greenhouse gases.

British officials said Blair will stress the importance of U.S. leadership in keeping Kyoto alive and preserving Western solidarity when he and Bush spend Thursday night at the prime minister's country retreat. And when Bush arrives in Genoa the next day, EU officials said, Chirac and Schroeder will use double-team tactics to make a compelling case that the U.S. stance toward global warming has become a critical factor in sustaining a healthy Atlantic alliance.

"Any attempt to prevent this internationally crucial agreement from getting underway in Bonn and making it ratifiable for everyone would be a serious political mistake," Schroeder said after meeting with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on Friday. He and Annan insisted the United States and Japan should realize the world cannot tolerate further delays while awaiting more studies of global warming as Bush proposed Friday by making \$120 million available for additional research.

"There is enough scientific evidence to wake us up and allow us to take action," Annan said. "We don't need to wait for perfect science to be able to act."

The latest scientific research shows the "greenhouse effect" -- in which carbon dioxide, methane and other pollutants help trap the sun's heat in Earth's atmosphere -- has accelerated greatly in recent years. A study by a U.N. scientific body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, concluded the 1990s were probably the hottest decade in history and 1998 the warmest year since record-keeping began in 1861.

The U.N. study predicts that sea levels could rise as much as three feet in the next 100 years because of melting ice caps and increasing water temperatures. Many islands and coastal areas could be inundated, and the severity of hurricanes and monsoons could worsen. Drastic climate change could also diminish harvests in poor countries, especially in Africa, and hasten the extinction of animal species.

At a conference in Amsterdam last week, about 1,500 scientists were shown evidence that the Arctic ice cap has already shrunk much faster than expected and caused a massive flow of fresh water into the North Atlantic that could be disrupting the Gulf Stream, which helps temper Europe's climate. Some scientists forecast that if left unchecked, the process could shut down the Gulf Stream within this century and make a stretch of land from London to Stockholm almost uninhabitable.

"The problem of global change is real, and it is more serious than is currently perceived politically," said Berrien Moore III, a leading member of the U.N. panel on climate change. "If the climate talks break down, the problem will not go away. And the longer we put off doing something, the more it will cost in the long run."

Staff writer Eric Pianin in Washington contributed to this report.

© 2001 The Washington Post Company